[Book Review] Harassment Architecture by Mike Ma

DER EINZIGE
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As I wait for almost a month for the books I ordered to arrive, as I'm overseas on an expeditionary base, I decided to revisit one of the earliest PDFs saved to my Books app. It's also a personal favorite of mine, not due to its own merit as much as the time I read it back during the late 2019-early 2020 era immediately before COVID hit. I have a lot of nostalgia for this time frame due to both my personal life & political activities around this time. This wasn't just the era of AWD, but also a bunch of random Discord servers LARPing as political parties. Good times. Still listening to 100 gecs money machine btw!

Regardless of my personal attachment to the book, rereading it 5 years later has confirmed that it is a legitimately good read. It's actually somewhat addictive, despite not having any structure, and I burned through all 150 pages in about 5 hours instead of doing my actual job. Something to understand going into it is that the book is completely sincere but masked under a thin layer of irony. This becomes clear when a section of the book is dedicated to how much the author hates irony, it casts the rest of the book in a different light. Prior to this, it really does come off as a pure shitpost, the type you'd find in old 4chan greentexts & iFunny textposts. The brief passage explaining how the author hates the age of irony, where you're derided for behaving in a serious or sincere manner, it is subtle confirmation that the author believes in everything he says. Maybe not the exact details in the stories being told, but the overall message of them is very real.

This isn't surprising as someone who's interacted with Mike Ma, back when he was fairly active on Xwitter & Telegram. He very much falls under our umbrella, leaning specifically towards the soft accelerationist & BAPist spheres. This also isn't surprising to people who fall into fringe positions in general, it's generally common practice to subtly hide our true beliefs in standard conversation under a layer of either sugarcoating or irony. What is notable this book is the reach its had, it's far more well known than most other books that show up RW reading lists & has garnered much more attention from Lefty critics than usual. Some books like *The Turner Diaries* or *The Hard Reset* may inspire some infamy in Lefty "watchdog" groups, but rarely actual book reviews.

Something these critics get right is the general tone of the book, a mix between *American Psycho* & *Fight Club*. The former is accurate as it truly does feel like a Patrick Batman-esque character narrating the story, both in personality & loose grip on reality. The latter is accurate because the book itself, as I said earlier, is very sincere but written in the language of irony - much like how the 'Narrator' from Fight Club speaks throughout the movie. Minus the Tyler Durden figure, unfortunately.

An early section of the book showcases this sincere irony well, particularly relating to antisemitism, & is called "Black And Blue Monday."

> Getting my shit kicked in by a clan of Jewish boarding school kids for referring to the Torah as "The Elder Scroll". Five or six of them repeatedly soccer-kicking my back and stomach in 7/11 parking lot. When it all ended, I noticed one of their hats had fallen off, and so I let him know. "My friend! Your beanie doth fell," and then they started kicking me all over again. I saw a couple of ambulances pass by, but they belonged to the local Hatzalah and would never rescue someone outside the faith. It's okay though; I stood up on my own. This is the kind of Monday I live for.

Later on, the author writes about a (fictional(?)) interaction in a coffee shop. He notices a girl wearing a Crystal Castles shirt, noting how he also enjoys the band, before realizing that she has an AOC pin on her bag. He briefly mentions how absurd it is to share a sliver of common ground with someone who hates him, before going into a short rant about how most niche musicians are Lefty radicals. His anger isn't about this fact, but rather that these radicals just end up making money for the big corporations they claim to hate instead of doing something cool or useful. A sentiment I share when looking at groups like the Weatherman Underground & compare them to modern Leftists. He ends this section with this:

> Regardless of all their faults, I still find between us just a sliver of common ground. They do not, and so this is where discourse ends. I realize they have the right idea, about just sating anyone who doesn't mostly agree with you, and I hate back once again. This can't go on forever. It won't. This standoff can only end in violence.
>
> She finishes her order and when she turns around I smile and get the same in return. It is in this moment that I feel what just a fraction of her affection is like. A word or two later and I could be a 'fascist' with a bloody nose and chai tea all over my Brooks Brothers Oxford Cotton Button Down. Her teeth would look good on a curb.

Although this is rapidly becoming common knowledge among the RW, don't forget that there was a long time where everyone was trying to find common ground with Leftists & engage them civilly. A few parts of this book are dedicated to deriding this notion. That final paragraph also resonates well, it's a feeling I've had with a number of friends, acquaintances, or lovers who are absolutely my political enemies but aren't perceptive enough to know that.

The next passage, titled “At The Drive Through,” is the first passage to outright denounce the irony of modern discourse. In this passage, the author makes the old adage that everyone is the star of the movie in their head. He uses this idea to categorize people as the media they consume. We've all seen this, the people who build their personalities around cringey Marvel jokes or sitcom characters. This can also be seen on the other side of the coin with people basing their personalities on “literally me” characters like Patrick Bateman or whoever Ryan Gosling played that year.

Despite this, he doesn't outright condemn this behavior. He sort of makes a point, one that I've thought about before, that basically everyone is derivative. Some people base their personalities off of better characters than others, but ultimately everyone is ‘something-esque.’

> We are some many millions into this and you are asking me not to take a little from here or use a little from that? At this point, the building blocks look a lot like the other building blocks beneath them, and those before them resemble some others until forever. Maybe I'll read the entire Western Canon to ensure that my every word is the first in print. Maybe I'll invent a new language and say crazy things nobody ever has. Maybe I'll just keep absorbing new particles from this and unloading into the ancient template from that.

He also derides this criticism because it's often used to take the sincerity out of someone. Rather than appreciate something, someone connects it to some fictional character. “Ukraine is like the Avengers!” That type of bullshit. From this chapter on, the reader is forced to realize that the words they're reading are sincere & any irony is purely for comedic effect or to get a point across.

The next passage, “Honest Work Doesn't Work,” is another that has since seeped into mainstream discourse. The point of it is to deride the old center-right talking point about “respectable work,” and instead advocates for wild (but meaningful & sincere) antics or projects that lead to greatness. This is one of the most commonly quoted passages from the book.

> You aren't a better person for making money in a "respectable" fashion — you are handicapped and lying to yourself. **Honest work is a confused and pointless shot in the foot.** You'll limp home every day for the rest of your life. Quit your job and sit in the sun every day. Quit your job and run away into the woods forever. Quit your job and shoot a politician. Escape by speedboat off the coast of Miami, hide in the tropics somewhere. Do it again there, speedboat even farther south. Kill your miser boss and his miser boss and escape using one of their private jets. Go to the marina at night with twenty-five friends and steal every yacht you can. Sail as a fleet, down into the southern world, and conquer small towns. Kill yourself if it doesn't work out. Fly to East Europe and die in war. Or just keep making department stores until you rot away, maybe have a couple beers and play a little golf in-between.

As I said, this is something that has seeped into mainstream discourse. People are finally realizing that making six figures off of bullshit email jobs actually is far better than some pointless blue collar job. The Yuppies were right, sorry chud. This is also another point where the author advocates some comically absurd & violent actions seemingly for no other reason than they are both cool & real.

Another noteworthy passage, titled “Lean Into Until,” is one of my favorites.

This one especially resonated with me when I first read this book as it perfectly describes the feeling you get when looking at ancient structures in a world now filled with monotonous skyscrapers. In this chapter, he generally describes how boring the modern world is compared to the past.

> We could rebuild old Greece. Knock down the skyscrapers, burn modern art, wipe blank the entirety of digitization. We can level housing developments and turn shopping centers back into forests. We could leave behind a world of impurity and pain. Arguments settled in sword fights. Television replaced by live theater. Everything is marble and nothing hurt. We could tell the time via sundial and we could raise our precious young in the purity of sunlight. We could sleep and wake as our bodies felt. We could finally look up and see stars again. They would reflect in our eyes, guiding the way when memory couldn't. Then, just as this all becomes routine to us, we burn it all down and start again.

This is a key theme throughout the work. It's not necessarily the attitudes of modernity that he hates, it's the disenchantment that people feel. It's the boredom of it all. He talks about how much he hates people he perceives as self-righteous & self-important not because he is against these attitudes but because these people have not earned it like our ancestors did, in a world where most tasks are truly a life & death scenario. Mike Ma walks a very fine line between “nothing matters” & “everything matters.”

The next passage is “Science Fiction Novel,” followed by “Spirit That Is Certain of Itself. Morality.” Both of these are essentially dream sequences. The first is a fictionalized (maybe?) account of self imposed sleep deprivation & the subsequent hallucinations/dreams after the crashout. The passage is almost nonsensical, and I’d say it's an accurate representation of an LSD trip. Regardless, he does a great job of painting a picture of such an abstract landscape. I’m inclined to believe this passage is based on true events, purely due to how accurate it is to my own experiences with sleep deprivation.

The latter passage is another daydream, this time about a the narrator walking into a stereotypical pizza shop & killing 3 police officers for little reason. It's in fairly graphic detail, but is beautifully written. What's most notable about this passage is how accurate it feels to the random violent intrusive thoughts that I’m sure most people have, those daydreams where you fantasize about following your instincts & will without care. It ends as such:

> I exit out the same door I broke in through. No police respond to the scene because it didn't happen. I'm waking up from a nap in the sun, and my skin is hideously burned. That is the absolute truth. I'm absolutely sure I'll [die] in the future, outside of just daydreams. Absolutely and most definitely.

“Wednesday And Please Let It Be Real” is the next passage I took note of, and another that resonated very strongly with me. The narrator is forced into an Applebee’s, which he correctly describes as synonymous with Auschwitz. While there he watches a random family, specifically its patriarch, as they order their food. He describes his clothes & how they're obviously his idea of “fancy,” before deriding him for wearing his sunday's best to an Applebees of all places. He derides Applebees for microwaving everything they serve, to include drinks & the cheque. He also (rightfully) condemns the “restaurant” for having 2 for 5 martinis but limiting you to 3.

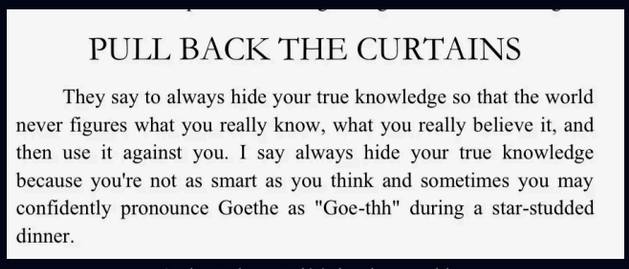
The best quote from this passage,

> It's not only this but the fact that only two minutes down this very road is a family- owned restaurant with much cheaper food. Food that is cooked using real ovens and real stoves. But no, Jerry Russo from the local Honda dealership took his family to this disgusting, chemical-ridden death trap. Applebee's translates to Auschwitz. This sick fuck has growing children to feed and he's shoving microwaved chicken bites into their smiling mouths. They trusted him. Their mother trusted him. I trusted him.

(Author’s note, as in me not Mike, if you eat at Applebees you should hang yourself with a guitar string. At least have the decency to eat Outback’s “food.”)

The next passage is another that's widely quoted in other media, including simply the title, “Accelerate the World, Decelerate your Tribe.” This is a point where I must remind you that Mike Ma is an accelerationist, though perhaps in a manner more similar to Ted Kaczynski than James Mason. In it, he talks about accelerationism with a sobering amount of realism when compared to the more idealistic militarism of Dr. Pierce or James Mason. Mike Ma’s accelerationism isn't about violently overthrowing the government, it's about shattering random windows & writing “Nigger” in public bathroom stalls. Despite his hatred of irony, he essentially advocates using to tear apart society by making everything so meaningless that everyone devolves into self-centered anarchy. He does share the common ground of hating power substations though.

> I have become acceleration. Want more detail? Acceleration isn't just causing problems and watching the world contort in reaction. Acceleration is about causing problems the right way, the smart way, the kind of way that keeps you out of jail, because you can't move forward when you're chained down. Nietzsche said that evolution doesn't necessarily mean progress, that just because we changed it doesn't mean we changed for the better. Well when I say "to accelerate" or "to push forward" or "to lean into", I don't mean towards a better world – not immediately at least. We are leaning into the collapse. We are pushing for the ignition of cleansing fire. I am acceleration and I am the reaction. This way nobody knows who's doing what or why. I am the one dumping magazine after magazine into a crowded gay nightclub and I am the fat black woman with DMV-phenotype who thought it'd be naughty to party with her gay friends that night.



PULL BACK THE CURTAINS

They say to always hide your true knowledge so that the world never figures what you really know, what you really believe it, and then use it against you. I say always hide your true knowledge because you're not as smart as you think and sometimes you may confidently pronounce Goethe as "Goe-thh" during a star-studded dinner.

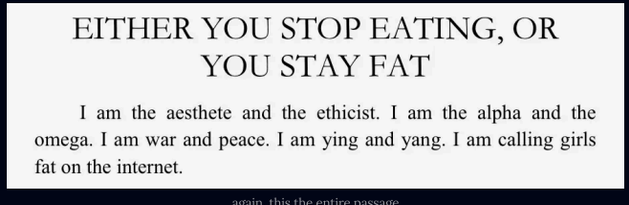
Another good passage, this is the only paragraph btw

A few pages later & we meet “Three Feet On The Gas.” This entire passage is dedicated to various forms of accelerationist vandalism, ranging from cutting AC cables of random buildings to building EMP devices to destroy random people's phones to blowing up cell towers. Each sentence starts with a sarcastic “We hear…” which reads as almost a threat. Like a halfassed denial of responsibility without actually saying so. The true purpose of this passage is obviously to give readers ideas, which worked as many of these have been put into action & have later appeared in *The Hard Reset*. It's certainly one of the outright sincere passages buried in a sea of more subtle irony, obscuring it as another dark joke instead of a Pinterest page for vandalism.

The passage titled “Romanticism Gatekeeper” is another that is blatantly taking a stand against irony, while also portraying the absurdity of existing as someone who cares. The passage takes the form of conversation between the narrator & a friend, a rare occurrence where the narrator seems to show his true feelings to another person. This is entirely pointless, of course, because the second person in the conversation only gives short answers & clearly doesn't quite understand what the narrator is saying. Conversely, he does but simply doesn't want to talk about it. This passage is another one that resonates with me, as well as others I’ve spoken to, because many have an experience of trying to explain something important to a friend who simply doesn't get it, or just doesn't want to. It ends on an interesting note:

> I am suffering. You are too and you won't admit it.

Among the sea of calls for comical violence & misanthropy, there's also a beautifully written passage about the author's description of love. It's quite impressive on its own, and really sticks out in the book. Later on, another passage accomplishes a similarly impressive description of nostalgia. I should mention that around this time the book becomes far less pessimistic & turns to a more absurdist outlook.



EITHER YOU STOP EATING, OR YOU STAY FAT

I am the aesthete and the ethicist. I am the alpha and the omega. I am war and peace. I am ying and yang. I am calling girls fat on the internet.

again, this the entire passage

“Drinks At David’s” is a passage I’m sure is based on an actual event, purely due to how well it matches my own experiences. The literal events of the passage, simply showing up to a party at an acquaintance's house, are fairly straightforward. What's interesting is the author’s internal monologue as these events play out. About half of this passage is about the author lighting a cigarette & offering some to a group nearby. A girl brings up how she quit & how cigarettes are bad for you, the author immediately pokes fun at such a profound & revolutionary statement. This sparks a short conversation before the author makes his second & final actual statement in the entire exchange. A deliberately but not extremely abrasive statement, “Not everyone who smokes is handsome but everyone who is handsome smokes.” He judges the responses to this before deriding the gay community for its lack of stylistic taste & disappearing from the party, noting that he will never speak to this group of people again for no particular reason.

A passage that's almost out of place due to its seriousness, “Why We Hurt,” puts forth an interesting & legitimate theory for the rising rates of depression in the modern world. Rather than blaming chemicals or social media, Mike Ma theorizes that ugliness is the cause. Ugly architecture, obesity, naturally ugly people being allowed to have more ugly kids. I suppose if the entire world was populated by athletic people with symmetrical faces, I would be pretty happy as well.

> When we see anti-beauty, it kills the soul and human spirit. Anti-beauty — a strip mall, grown men in football jerseys, the obese — is to ambition what alcohol is to the liver and brain. I believe that seeing ugly feels ugly. I believe ugly damages us to the core, sometimes irreparably. I believe we absorb and manifest the horrible things we take in through our eyes.

Closer to the end of the book, the author describes the ultimate enemy in "Kings of the Underworld." This passage is a long winded & artful description of someone with a weak jawline wearing an Avengers shirt & jean shorts in his overpriced NYC apartment while eating his daily rations of hyper-processed microwave meals. Despite any complaints about Jews or other races, this general phenotype is our true polar opposite. The Last Man.

The final page in the book, after a few graphics & footnotes, is a random essay on how you shouldn't eat gluten because of its links to schizophrenia & other mental disorders. This is true, by the way.

To conclude, Harassment Architecture is still one of my favorite books. Sure, you probably won't learn much from it, but it is both entertaining & artfully put together. In truth, it's more of a poetry book than a novel, just written by a far-rightist instead of a left-leaning overweight lesbian. Above all, Mike Ma does a fantastic job of capturing the actual emotion of being a "man among the ruins," or whatever other term you use to describe yourself. I wouldn't call it timeless, already some of its teachings are leaking into mainstream discourse so eventually it will loose its zaniness & sting. But it will serve as a chilling reminder for those of the future on what we had to deal with today, a glimpse into the decline.

Hail Victory.

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Liked by Der Einzige

Initially passed over the book during its initial release and prominence in RW culture. Read it for the first time earlier this year, on your recommendation, and I've reread it 2-3 times since at work.

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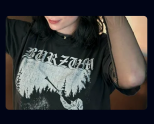

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